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ABSTRACT

A 1989 comprehensive report addressed the then-current status of curricula in all of the mainstream components of most mass communication programs: journalism, advertising, broadcasting, magazines, public relations, and visual communication. Recently, a study replicated the advertising portion of the original report, using a questionnaire based largely on the original and employing subsamples of respondents that match or are similar to the original subsamples. In the original study, respondents were asked to rate the importance of general areas of study in a liberal arts program and also to rate the importance of specialized areas of study usually found in advertising curricula, such as copy and layout and media planning. Two groups constituted the sample: educator members of the Advertising Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and presidents and education chairs of local professional advertising associations. Results in 1989 demonstrated very strong agreement between educators and practitioners in the relative importance of general areas of study as well as specific advertising and advertising-related courses. And as in the earlier study, in the current study it appears that professors and practitioners of advertising are largely in agreement about the relative importance of various general areas of study. Like the earlier study, this study showed no dramatic differences between educator and practitioner views of what is important in the typical advertising curriculum. The conclusion of the original curriculum study appears to be appropriate for this study--that advertising education "is attuned to the needs of the marketplace." (NKA)

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Educators and Practitioners Look at the Advertising Curriculum

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Educators and Practitioners Look At the Advertising Curriculum

Traditionally, college-level curricula in advertising have been based heavily on liberal arts components as well as the professional components that prepare students for work in the field. Educators constantly review programs and evaluate the balance between the theoretical and applied components of education for persons wanting to become advertising professionals. And although they retain the right to modify programs as they see fit, they generally try to be responsive to the identified needs of the industry that hires their graduates.

In 1989 the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication issued "Challenges and Opportunities in Journalism and Mass Communication Education," a report of the Task Force on the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication Education.[1] The comprehensive report addressed the then-current status of curricula in all of the mainstream components of most mass communication programs: journalism, advertising, broadcasting, magazines, public relations, and visual communication. The purpose was "to characterize the academic and professional preparation of individuals aspiring to careers in journalism and mass communication" and to "identify the integrating principles that should characterize education for mass communication in the twenty-first century."[2]

The purpose of this study is to replicate the advertising portion of the original report, using a

[1] "Challenges and Opportunities in Journalism and Mass Communication Education," *Journalism Educator*, Spring, 1989, pp. A-1—A-24.
[2] Ibid., p. A-3.

questionnaire based largely on the original questionnaire and employing subsamples of respondents that match or are similar to the original subsamples.[3]

The Original Study

In addition to characterizing the academic and professional preparation of persons aspiring to careers in mass communication, the original Task Force's charge was to address the role of liberal arts in mass communication education. The Task Force's report was (1) to provide guidance to mass communication units seeking accreditation by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication; (2) to provide a framework that units could use as a guide to demonstrating compliance with Standard 3, on curriculum; and (3) to give guidance to the accrediting council itself.

The subcommittee that examined the advertising curriculum was driven by several assumptions:

> "First, current accreditation standards require a wide range of components in a given curriculum. Second, in addition to the accreditation standards, most programs take into account the stated needs of the local and national professional community. Third, academic programs accomplish the objectives implicit in the first two assumptions, through varying emphases on applied and theoretical program components."
>
> "A fourth assumption is that in most good programs, faculty diversity promotes course offerings consistent with the needs of the professions. Fifth, there have historically been

[3] Alan D. Fletcher wrote the final report, with comments and suggestions from several members of the Advertising Task Force: Alice Gagnard, Southern Methodist University, Ernie Larkin, University of Oklahoma; Scott Whitlow, University of Kentucky; Lee Wenthe, University of Georgia; Kelly Pena, Louisiana State University, Ann K. Bowman, American Advertising Federation; and Howard Bell, American Advertising Federation.

mixed perceptions in the professional community of the need for profession-specific education and the form it should take. Sixth, educators generally take into account student's needs for preparation for their first jobs and for their overall careers."

The Questionnaire

In the original study, respondents were asked to rate the importance of general areas of study in a liberal arts program, such as English, sociology, mathematics and other areas of study offered in four-year colleges. They were also asked to rate the importance of specialized areas of study usually found in advertising curricula, such as copy and layout and media planning.

The Sample

Two major groups constituted the sample: educator members of the Advertising Division of AEJMC and presidents and education chairs of local professional advertising associations, all of whom were affiliated with the American Advertising Federation. At the national level, AAF represents the interests of advertisers, the media and the advertising industry generally. For educators, AAF's most visible activity is the National Student Advertising Competition, which has attracted participation from colleges throughout the United States since its inception in the early 1970s.

The educator-professional subsamples were designed to reveal the degree of agreement or disagreement in a limited area of curriculum decision making between the educators, who design curricula, and the advertising community that hires graduates of advertising programs.

The Results, 1989

The results demonstrated very strong agreement between educators and practitioners in the relative importance of general areas of study as well as specific advertising and advertising-related courses. Table 1 shows educators' and practitioners' average ratings for each of 17 areas of study typically required in communication- or journalism-centered advertising programs. The lower the rating, the more important the area of study.

Table 1
Ratings of Importance of General Areas of Study
(1989 Survey)

	Average Ratings by	
Area of Study	*Professors*	*Practitioners*
1. Advertising	1.11	1.21 (2)
2. Marketing	1.22	1.18 (1)
3. English composition	1.40	1.28 (3)
4. Psychology	1.53	2.06 (6)
5. Journalism writing	1.80	1.59 (4)
6. Economics	1.94	2.09 (7)
7. Sociology	1.96	2.52 (10)
8. Computer science	2.09	2.37 (8)
9. Literature	2.10	2.42 (9)
10. Management	2.16	1.89 (5)
11. History	2.22	3.52 (14)
12. Mathematics	2.51	2.73 (11)
13. Philosophy	2.71	3.01 (12)
14. Anthropology	2.72	4.06 (17)
15. Foreign language	2.91	3.52 (14)
16. Music	3.01	3.11 (13)
17. Natural science	3.05	3.64 (16)

Table 2 shows educator and practitioner ratings of the importance of specialized courses in advertising. With one marked exception, agreement between the two groups was also strong. In both sets of data, educators and practitioners showed little disagreement in general and specific

areas of study. Notable, however, was the Number 1 ranking that the practitioners gave to the internship—compared with the eighth-place ranking that educators gave. One might argue that in most programs, the internship is not an actual course, but rather a work experience. Educators' mindsets may have excluded the internship as a course.

Table 2
Ratings of Importance of Specialized Courses
(1989 Survey)

	Average Ratings by	
Specialization	***Professors***	***Practitioners***
1. Principles of advertising	1.16	1.44 (2)
2. Advertising copywriting	1.21	1.48 (4)
3. Advertising strategy	1.28	1.46 (3)
4. Advertising media planning	1.34	1.51 (6)
5. Advertising research	1.50	1.50 (5)
6. Consumer behavior	1.53	1.54 (7)
7. Creative design/layout	1.58	1.72 (8)
8. Advertising internship	1.59	1.41 (1)
9. Communication ethics/law	1.81	1.94 (12)
10. Advertising sales	2.25	1.80 (9)
11. Promotions	2.27	1.87 (10)
12. Retail advertising	2.40	1.89 (11)
13. Advertising history	2.69	2.59 (13)
14. International advertising	2.83	2.60 (14)

Conclusions of the Original Study

For members of the Task Force the original study produced no surprises. It confirmed their belief that advertising education "is attuned to the needs of the marketplace. As members of a professional academic program, professors are aware of the needs of the advertising industry..."[4]

[4] Ibid., p. A-12.

Method

The current study follows as closely as possible the method employed in the original study. One subsample consisted of all members of the Advertising Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication as listed in the current AEJMC directory. The other subsample was an interval sample (every second listing) of corporate members of the American Advertising Federation.

The two-page mailing, with a postage-paid return envelope, produced a response level of 44 percent among the 129 Advertising Division members listed in the directory and 22 percent among the 67 AAF members drawn from the AAF directory.

Except for two minor modifications, the questions matched the originals. The question that produced Table 1, above, remained identical to the original. Question two, which produced Table 2, above, was identical except for the addition of "integrated marketing communication" and "interactive advertising/marketing," to reflect changes in the advertising business since the earlier study.

Results

As in the earlier study, it appears that professors of advertising and practitioners of advertising are largely in agreement about the relative importance of various general areas of study. As shown in Table 3, the two groups agree generally on the importance of the top five areas of study: advertising, marketing, English composition, psychology, and management. The lowest-ranking areas of studies in the professor list were also lowest on the practitioner list.

It could be significant that Journalism writing, which professors rated at eight, received third place rating with practitioners. The other three discrepancies were sociology, with a professor ranking of six and a practitioner ranking of ten; economics, with a professor ranking of seven and a practitioner ranking of nine; and journalism writing, with a professor ranking of eight and a practitioner ranking of three. Yet none of these rankings differed dramatically.

Table 3
Ratings of Importance of General Areas of Study
(2001 Survey)

Area of Study	*Average Ratings by Professors*	*Practitioners*
1. Advertising	1.05	1.14 (1)
2. Marketing	1.24	1.21 (2)
3. English composition	1.52	1.57 (4)
4. Psychology	1.71	2.14 (6)
5. Management	1.96	1.64 (5)
6. Sociology	2.08	2.57 (10)
7. Economics	2.14	2.35 (9)
8. Journalism writing	2.17	1.50 (3)
9. Literature	2.26	2.21 (7)
10. History	2.45	2.28 (8)
11. Anthropology	2.54	3.35 (14)
12. Computer science	2.61	2.57 (10)
13. Foreign language	2.66	3.50 (15)
14. Mathematics	2.73	3.21 (13)
15. Philosophy	2.96	3.07 (12)
16. Music	2.98	3.42 (15)
17. Natural science	3.38	3.64 (17)

One AAF respondent made a strong point about the nature of sound advertising education:

> "Too many students want vocational education to gain skills. We need educated people who know how to think clearly and apply thejr ideas to communication in various forms of persuasion. A college education should provide a cerebral platform for life, not just a job. Too many advertising programs are simply entertaining students for four to six

> years. Then they must learn how to think on the job. Too many then wash out because advertising is *work*...a four-letter word.

As for the specialized courses typically offered in advertising programs, educators and practitioners maintained general agreement. See Table 4. Particularly in the least-favored courses, professors and practitioners agreed on double-digit rankings: communication ethics/law, promotions, international advertising, advertising sales, and retail advertising. At the top of the professors' rankings, the creative design/layout course received a low ranking by practitioners.

Compared with the wide split in the perceived importance of advertising internships in the original study, in this one professors ranked internships somewhat higher than did the practitioners, although the 6th place ranking can hardly be considered a high ranking.

In the two courses added to the current study, "integrated marketing communication" and "interactive advertising," practitioners expressed higher rankings than did professors.

Four professors noted that good advertising education should be provided in more than one track, such as creative, account management, media, and sales. One advocated two tracks, a left brain track and a right brain track.

One AAF respondent placed only five advertising courses in the Very Important category: Principles of Advertising, Advertising Strategy, Consumer Behavior, Communication Ethics/Law, and Integrated Marketing Communication. That respondent placed Advertising

Media Planning, Creative Design/Layout, and Advertising Sales in the Somewhat Important category, writing that "These will be taught by the employer. Very vocational for most students."

The same AAF respondent stated a position on the importance of an internship: "Too much is made of hands-on working before employment. Students need to bear down on (other courses) during college. The AAF case is as good as any internship IF it is done in a supervised environment for credit as a capstone course." An Advertising Division member wrote, "Internships are vital for obtaining jobs (yet) they are unimportant in a curriculum. Students should do internships as often as possible – for no credit."

Table 4
Ratings of Importance of Specialized Courses
(2001 Survey)

	Average Ratings by	
Specialization	*Professors*	*Practitioners*
1. Principles of advertising	1.22	1.07 (1)
2. Advertising strategy	1.22	1.07 (1)
3. Advertising copywriting	1.33	1.85 (7)
4. Advertising media planning	1.36	2.00 (8)
5. Advertising research	1.42	1.71 (5)
6. Advertising internship	1.43	2.07 (9)
7. Creative design/layout	1.56	2.42 (12)
8. Integrated marketing comm.	1.71	1.14 (3)
9. Consumer behavior	1.73	1.50 (4)
10. Interactive advertising	2.03	1.78 (6)
11. Communication ethics/law	2.07	2.28 (10)
12. Promotions	2.31	2.57 (15)
13. International advertising	2.38	2.50 (14)
14. Advertising sales	3.10	2.35 (11)
15. Retail advertising	2.64	2.42 (12)

It might be useful for educators to learn of differences in their ratings over a 12-year period, in which considerable technological changes have taken place. Table 5 shows the differences.

The top four general areas of study in the original study remained at the top in this study, and the four lowest ranking areas were all still in double-digits in the current study.

Two major shifts in the rankings were in management, rising from 10th to 5th place, and computer science, which fell from 8th place to 12th place. But most areas did not change: advertising, marketing, English composition, psychology, literature, music, and natural sciences.

Table 5

Ratings of Importance of General Areas of Study: Professors in 1989 and 2001

	Average Ratings by	
Area of Study	***Professors*** **1989**	***Professors*** **2001**
1. Advertising	1.11	1.05 (1)
2. Marketing	1.22	1.24 (2)
3. English composition	1.40	1.52 (3)
4. Psychology	1.53	1.71 (4)
5. Journalism writing	1.80	2.17 (8)
6. Economics	1.94	2.14 (7)
7. Sociology	1.96	2.08 (6)
8. Computer science	2.09	2.61 (12)
9. Literature	2.10	2.26 (9)
10. Management	2.16	1.96 (5)
11. History	2.22	2.45 (10)
12. Mathematics	2.51	2.73 (14)
13. Philosophy	2.71	2.96 (15)
14. Anthropology	2.72	2.54 (11)
15. Foreign language	2.91	2.66 (13)
16. Music	3.01	2.98 (16)
17. Natural science	3.05	3.38 (17)

The findings for specialized courses were similar to the findings for general areas of study. Courses ranked in the top five positions in the earlier study were still in the top five in the current study. And of the bottom five ranked courses in the original study, all five were at the bottom in the current study.

As noted, in the current study are two additional courses reflective of developments in technology and in philosophy of corporate communication: interactive advertising and integrated marketing communication. One can only speculate about the 8th place ranking for integrated marketing communication and the 10th place ranking for interactive advertising.

Table 6
Ratings of Importance of Specialized Courses: Professors in 1989 and 2001

Specialization	*Average Ratings by Professors* 1989	*Professors* 2001
1. Principles of advertising	1.16	1.22 (1)
2. Advertising copywriting	1.21	1.33 (3)
3. Advertising strategy	1.28	1.22 (1)
4. Advertising media planning	1.34	1.36 (4)
5. Advertising research	1.50	1.42 (5)
6. Consumer behavior	1.53	1.73 (9)
7. Creative design/layout	1.58	1.56 (7)
8. Advertising internship	1.59	1.43 (6)
9. Communication ethics/law	1.81	2.07 (11)
10. Advertising sales	2.25	3.10 (15)
11. Promotions	2.27	2.31 (12)
12. Retail advertising	2.40	2.64 (14)
13. International advertising	2.83	2.38 (13)
14. Interactive advertising		2.03 (10)
15. Integrated marketing communication		1.71 (8)

Conclusions

Like the earlier study this one showed no dramatic differences between educator and practitioner views of what is important in the typical advertising curriculum, either in the general areas of study or in the specialized advertising courses that students typically take. The differences that do exist do not signal major change in professor and practitioner views of the relative importance of different components of typical academic programs in advertising.

The conclusion of the original curriculum study appears to be appropriate for this study, that advertising education "is attuned to the needs of the marketplace. As members of a professional academic program, professors are aware of the needs of the advertising industry…[5]

[5] Ibid., p. A-12.